



## Harford County Commission on Veterans Affairs Meeting Minutes, February 1, 2018

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Robert Brown at 6:30 p.m. in the Conference Room, 220 S. Main Street, Bel Air, Maryland.

**Attending:** Bob Brown, Hayden Anthony, Lisa Brown, Janice Cassady, Jim Castelli, Bill Elliott, Art Kaff, Scott Kearby, Patricia O’Keefe, Larry Owens, Deacon Vic Petrosino, Pam Silcox, & Michael Ray

**Excused:** Councilman McMahan (liaison), Mary Worthington, & Bill Montgomery

Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Brown. Prayer was led by Deacon Vic.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Minutes from the December HCCOVA meeting were sent to commission members for review prior to the February meeting. Bill Montgomery motioned for approval of the minutes and Jim Castelli seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved by commission members.

**Commented [BD1]:** Attendance indicates Bill Montgomery as excused/absent.

### **Opening Comments:**

Mr. Mike Ray was introduced as the Chamber of Commerce’s proposed replacement for Mr. Bill Suchting. He was nominated by the Chamber President, and must now be confirmed.

**Commented [BD2]:** Chamber

### **Opening Comments from Appointed Members:**

Hayden Anthony – discussed the HCPL Bel Air Branch’s Veterans Book Club. This club is an opportunity to discuss the selected book as well as social engagement with other veterans.

Bill Elliott & Janice Cassady – the spring semester has just started at Harford Community College (HCC). They have been busy with academic and financial advising. A bill was presented at the State Senate to require all community colleges to establish a dedicated veteran’s resource center. This would include admissions, academic advisement, financial aid and other resources. HCC already meets this requirement.

Lisa Brown – working on a Veteran’s Day assembly framework to present to HCPS so schools can plan a ceremony to acknowledge all veterans, especially those from their school communities.

Larry Owens – inquired about status/next actions for JROTC. Jim Castelli responded that application has been submitted/accepted and HCPS (proposed location: Joppatowne HS) is in the Que. Movement up on the que will be based on socio-economic conditions and political backing. MOAA is advocating on behalf of Harford County on this action. The Commission will look in to possible collaboration or support.

Pam Silcox – will send out a “save the date” to vendors for this year’s Veteran’s Resource Fair (Saturday, November 10<sup>th</sup>). Pam also mentioned that the new name for VERUS, one of the vendors, is *Dog Tags & Tails*.

#### **GUESTS/PRESENTATIONS:**

**Mr. Gordie Burke**, - Regional Resource Coordinator, Central Region, State of Maryland

- Behavioral Health services for the state of Maryland (1 of 5 staff members)
- Connecting veterans (mostly those that do not qualify for VA services) with behavioral health services
- Due to very limited budget, he is trying to coordinate with existing group homes in each county to host veterans/behavioral health services for minimal fee.
- His office receives approximately 1000 calls per year, answered on a 24/7 basis.

**Betty Willard** – Retirement Services Officer, Aberdeen Proving Ground

- Office provides assistance to retirees, transitioning service members & casualty services to people in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania & West Virginia (anyone in this area that does not want to go to Fort Meade – the other transition center in the region)
- Located in Building 4305, APG (Identification Building)
- Provides services to over 200 people/month
- Emphasized the importance of spouse/family members knowing where service member’s DD214 is located. This form is the only way to receive benefits
- May 12<sup>th</sup> (beginning of Armed forces Week) – Retiree Fair and Luncheon

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

**Mission and Vision Review** – Robert Brown

- Changes to the mission and vision statements were presented to the County Council as a resolution. The Council voted in favor of the resolution & the changes are now permanent.

Mission: To advocate for our veterans and their families, and connect them to resources through outreach and education.

Vision: A Harford County community that is responsive to the needs of Veterans and their families.

#### **Outreach Activity Ideas**

- Hayden contacted Habitat POC (Jeremy) to inquire about required training & select project/date. All participants will need to attend safety/training class. No project date selected, looking toward a late spring date. Hayden will advise at next meeting.
- Discussion continued on commission members selecting an organization, activity or event to support as part of outreach in addition to Habitat. No decision was made.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Veterans Benefits Update:**

- **Property Tax Credit:**
  - County Council approved tax credit to give 20% property tax credit to retired military residents over the age of 65, and residents over the age of 65 who have lived in the same dwelling for 40 or more years.
- **Submission of Claims to the VA.** Information provided on the effort by the Department of Veterans Affairs to expedite claims processing through the Decision Ready Claims process. Handouts were provided to all members present. Information can be found at: <https://explore.va.gov/disability-compensation>.
  - Veteran are encouraged to work with a VSO (Veterans Service Organization) such as DAV, American Legion, or VFW to get assistance in preparing their claim. The claim is then submitted as one complete packet all at one time.
  - Claim does **not** need to be processed before veteran can register for health benefits from the VHA, just enrollment using their DD214.
  - VA has contracted out claims processing to allow VA doctors & medical staff more time for patient care vs claim paperwork/physicals.
  - Although the commission is not a VSO, it is important for members to be familiar with this process and advise veterans of this resource when contacted with requests for assistance. The Commission maintains a list of agencies that can assist.

Commented [BD3]: Veterans are

## **BUSINESS FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 6:30 PM.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Prepared by Lisa Brown